



CONGRESSMAN

John J. Duncan, Jr.

Washington Report

Second District—Tennessee

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

✓ **Homeland Security**

I spoke on the floor of the House and voted against the new Department of Homeland Security, because I believe it will eventually make the federal government even bigger, more bureaucratic, and more expensive, and not make our country any safer. And most estimates are that it will cost three to four billion just to implement. Dan Thomasson, of the Scripps-Howard News Service, wrote that the new Department “could produce an unwieldy, overblown bureaucracy that would worsen the situation and leave the country even more vulnerable than it is now.” Ivan Eland, writing in the *Washington Times*, said: “If history is any guide, the new cumbersome Department of Homeland Security is unlikely to make the U.S. homeland more secure from attacks by ‘lean and mean’ terrorist groups, and may make it less so.” William Schneider, of the *National Journal*, wrote that it will “simply add another layer of bureaucracy. Will adding another layer of government at the top make a great deal of difference? Not if the problem is at the bottom.” And Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) the most senior member of the House, said: “Reorganization doesn’t always get you the results you want. Sometimes it gets you more confusion, more expense, more people, and less work.”

✓ **Public Relations**

Many members who voted for the new Department agree that there were many problems with it and that it would just add costs and not really make the government any better. But they felt they had to vote for it to show that they were doing more for security and in case some new terrorist event occurs. Thus, it became more of a public relations act than something that will do any real good, and I was surprised that 132 Members voted against it. I had already voted for \$40 billion to respond to the September 11 tragedies, to authorize military action against the Taliban, and for bills to increase aviation security, anti-terrorism protection, and increased defense spending. However, if we go overboard, we will be giving undeserved victories to the terrorists. Even if we spent the entire federal budget on defense and security from terrorists, we still could not make the Nation 100% safe, and there are other important government activities. The conservative columnist Stephen Moore, writing in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, may have summed it up best: “There are a number of problems with the proposal. First, and most important, we already have a Department of Homeland Security, and it is called the Defense Department. If

Defense, which spends about \$350 billion a year—or more than twice what any other nation spends on military concerns—isn’t spending that money on protecting the homeland, what is it spending these funds on? The very reason we had a 9/11 attack was that our government wasn’t doing the one thing it is supposed to do: Keep us safe from foreign harm.” Columnist Samuel Francis wrote that “natural bureaucratic growth” and politically-correct crusades against dissidents “will bloat the new department far beyond what its original architects may have intended. Instead of applauding the birth of this new federal leviathan, those Americans who remain committed to constitutional liberty should greet it with a cold eye.”

✓ **Big Government**

Every nation has been blessed with natural resources, natural beauty, or highly-educated people, or a combination thereof, that would enable that nation to boom economically if it had the right system. Cuba has sugar and other crops and beautiful beaches and could be a paradise with the right leadership. The former Soviet Union had far more oil, gold, natural gas, and other resources than the U.S., but most of its people had just a small fraction of what U.S. citizens have. Every place where the people either voted in big

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government or had it forced on them by leftist or corrupt rulers, the people have ended up starving or with a terribly poor standard of living. The opposite is also true. The people who have by far the most prosperity, the best food, housing, medical care, etc. is where they have not fallen for the myth that government could solve all problems and where the percentage of the GDP that government takes is kept at a low or at least not exorbitant figure. Big government really is best at only one thing: wiping out the middle class.

✓ **Big Business**

People are justifiably upset at the scandals around Enron, Global Crossing, and several other major corporations. If we had a true free enterprise, free market system, giant corporations would not dominate almost every industry or business sector. Once again, though, when we allowed our federal government to get so big, this led to a corresponding growth in the size, power, and influence of extremely big business. As the federal government grew, it was the very biggest businesses that got the large and lucrative federal contracts, the favorable regulatory rulings, the tax breaks, the sweetheart provisions buried in trade deals or other legislation. Environmentalists, perhaps unwittingly, became the best friends extremely big businesses had because the rules, regulations and red tape they demanded ran so many small businesses and small farms out of existence. When I was growing up, a poor man could start a gas station; now it would cost a fortune due to all the regulations. Now it is becoming more and more difficult for even medium-sized businesses to survive.



Pictured above are students and leaders from the University of Tennessee Upward Bound Program. Before last September 11th, the tour guides and Capitol Police used to tell me that they thought we got more visitors than any other Member of Congress. I do not know if this is true, but after September 11th, the number of visitors went way down. The Safety Patrol trip last year had 2000 students and chaperones, but this year fell to about 700. It seems now that the number of visitors is starting to pick back up. East Tennessee is a much better place to live and raise a family, but Washington is still a safe and wonderful place to visit. I hope you and your family will come by for a visit and tour of the Capitol.

They are forced to merge or sell out. Unless we drastically downsize the federal government (which we will probably never do) we will continue to see major scandals both within our overgrown government and in the gigantic corporations that big government has produced.

✓ **IRS Change**

In my last newsletter, I reported that the Treasury Department's own Inspector General had investigated computer records for 16,000 IRS employees and found they used "half their on-line time at work to visit sex sites, gamble, trade stocks, and do other non-work-related activity." At a hearing of the Government Reform Committee, on which I serve, I asked IRS Commissioner Charles Rossotti about this. He did not like me bringing this up, but I am pleased that on May 20, the Committee received a letter from him stating: "I am pleased to report we now have

the safeguards in place to implement a limited personal use policy... We have put into place software that addresses the concerns raised... This software blocks access to inappropriate sites (e.g. 'adult' sites, games, hate speech, etc; as we designate) and provides real time monitoring of user activity." Computers are great for many things, but they have also become some of the biggest time-wasters in the world and have a lot of harmful things on them, too.

✓ **National Debt**

The Congress recently voted to raise the national debt by \$450 billion to \$6.4 trillion. This is an astounding figure, and I voted against raising it to this level, because I just do not believe we should put more debt on our children and grandchildren. A few weeks ago, we were told that the federal government will run a deficit this year of approximately \$165 billion.

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Many people have pointed out that if the Congress does not become more fiscally conservative, the federal government will not be able to meet its obligations in the near future without drastic cuts in spending or benefits, huge increases in taxes, or printing much more money. Most governments around the world resort to issuing more money, but this simply makes pensions and savings and incomes worth much less in real purchasing power. Sen. George Voinovich, former Mayor of Cleveland and Governor of Ohio, said a few days ago: "The country's finances are in dire condition. We face a sea of red ink as far as the eye can see . . . We are on the edge of an abyss and we must stop before we commit fiscal suicide." Because of this, I may not be able to vote for some bills I would vote for if we were in better fiscal shape.

✓ **Education Bill**

The main problem with the most recent Education Bill is that, in the end, a district like ours gets back far less than it sends to Washington. Significant amounts are lopped off in Washington and Nashville for the operation of the bureaucracy. Then the bill provides special funding for areas of highest poverty, Native Americans, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians, etc., almost none of which we qualify for. These programs have been in effect since long before I went to Congress. For another example, we have spent billions for many years now on bilingual education. I read once that many Hispanic parents in California wanted their children in regular English language classes, because they felt it was an advantage for their children to learn English faster. But the school systems were getting extra money if there

were more students in the bilingual classes. One report said the Los Angeles and New York City school systems were teaching in approximately 100 languages. The Knox County School System once had to advertise all over the Country to find someone to teach some children who spoke only Iraqi Kurdish. We would have more money for education if we did not have to send so much to Washington. Also, our local teachers and principals really could do better jobs without dictates, mandates, and paperwork from Washington and Nashville. We especially need to stop letting some students get away with very serious disciplinary infractions just by claiming they are special education students.

✓ **Office Appointments**

I have held a great number of constituent days in every part of the Second District. This month, I will be conducting office appointments in the three district offices. These appointments will be with me, not with one of my fine staff. While I would like to spend more time with everyone, the only thing I ask is that you prepare in advance so you can limit your presentations to 15 minutes. This is in consideration of others who need appointments with me. These meetings will be on Monday, August 19th and Tuesday, August 20th in Knoxville; Wednesday, August 21st in Athens; and Thursday, August 22nd in Maryville. The phone numbers to call for appointments and the addresses are listed below:

Knoxville—865-523-3772
Howard Baker Federal Building
800 Market Street
Suite 110
Knoxville, TN 37902

Athens—423-745-4671
6 East Madison Avenue
Courthouse
Athens, TN 37303

Maryville—865-984-5464
262 East Broadway
Maryville, TN 37804

✓ **Forest Fires**

Once again, millions of acres out west have burned, causing billions of dollars in damage. Extremist groups protest anytime anyone wants to cut any trees, even though we have many millions more acres in forest land now than 50 or 100 years ago. They have driven many small logging companies out of business. Most of these fires have been caused by groups which have stopped even thinning of the forests or removal of dead and dying trees, resulting in a tremendous buildup of fuel on the floors of our national forests. The Washington Times had a front-page story which said "there are simply too many trees." It quoted Dale Bosworth, head of the U.S. Forest Service: "We have so many more trees out there than under natural conditions. There might have been 40 to 50 ponderosa pine per acre at one time. Now you've got several hundred per acre." The June 27 Washington Post had a headline reading: "Did Politics Put a Match to West Wild Lands?" We were warned in the Forests Subcommittee, on which I serve, in early 2000 that these fires would occur. Yet the political strength of environmental groups was too strong to do anything about it. Jay Ambrose, director of editorial policy for Scripps-Howard, wrote that the most flammable and dead trees and underbrush should have been removed, but: "the extreme environmentalists hate the prospect. It is unconscionable to them that anyone might make money off the forests. Never

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mind that a multi-use, public-private plan would help save the national forests from high-heat scorching fires that will slow renewed growth, and never mind that mechanical thinning would give firefighters a chance of controlling fires and protecting homes without risking their own lives. The extremist ideology spits on private enterprise.”

✓ **Environmental Progress**

The leading liberal magazine, *The New Republic*, recently said in a lead editorial that to listen to some presidential candidates “is to learn that the environment is in bad shape today and, with the smallest push, could be in disastrous shape tomorrow... Fortunately, this alarm is a false one. All forms of pollution in the United States – air, water, and toxic materials – have been declining for decades.” The highly-respected *Economist Magazine* of Great Britain, wrote recently that “the doom and gloom is wildly exaggerated. Known reserves of fossil fuels and most metals have risen. Agricultural production per head has risen; the numbers facing starvation have declined. The threat of biodiversity loss is real but exaggerated, as is the problem of tropical deforestation. Any pollution diminishes as countries grow richer and tackle it energetically. In other words, the planet is not in peril. There are problems, and they deserve attention, but nothing remotely so dire as most of the green movement keeps saying.” Most environmental groups have to keep pushing the idea that things are getting worse or their contributions will go down. Most of their policies increase the costs and power of government. The dangers of this are twofold: 1) These expenses and regulations

drive up taxes and prices and destroy jobs and hurt the poor and lower income and working people the most, and 2) Only a free market system generates the excess funds to do the good things for the environment that everyone wants done. The worst polluters in the world have been the socialist countries, and if we go too far down the big government road, we will end up harming the environment in the long run.

✓ **National Defense**

One of the most important and most legitimate functions of our federal government is national defense. Certainly one of the most honorable ways to serve this Country is by serving in our Nation’s armed forces. And I always have tried to help our veterans in every way possible. But I do not understand what seems to be almost an eagerness by some to go to war against Iraq. Saddam Hussein is terrible, but most of the people in Iraq have friends and relatives in the U.S. and could be our friends again as they once were. I voted for the Gulf War in 1990 and still believe that to be the right decision, because Hussein was moving into other countries. But we found that his military strength had been greatly exaggerated when his “elite” troops started surrendering to camera crews or anyone who would take them. Hussein has since been weakened further by the limited but significant international embargo. We have been spending an average of \$4,000,000 a day – over \$15 billion now – since the end of the Gulf War enforcing the no-flight zone in Iraq and have been bombing almost every week, accidentally killing many civilians, including many children. I wish we had been spending that money for good things in this Country.

Generally, the people who hate war the most are those who have been on the front lines of past conflicts, and I hope that we do not do this unless there is no other reasonable alternative.

✓ **War Department**

For most of our history the Defense Department was called the War Department. However, the name was changed because we prided ourselves on being a peace-loving nation and not attacking anyone unless we were threatened or attacked ourselves. Iraq has not attacked us or even threatened to do so. We cannot use the tragedies of last September 11 to justify war, because, as *New York Herald Tribune* columnist David Ignatius wrote: “How can the United States sell a war against Iraq to skeptical Arabs and Europeans. A good start would be to level with them and admit there is no solid evidence linking Baghdad to Osama bin Laden’s terrorist attacks against America.” Most of the terrorists and apparently most of the financing came from Saudi Arabia, which we still consider to be an ally. I think it was a mistake to turn NATO from a defensive organization into an offensive one as we did in Bosnia. Most of the world was against our actions there, as they are against us going to war in Iraq. It will cost us many billions over the next few years if we do so, and I just do not believe we should be the world’s policeman. President Kennedy said in 1962: “We must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent nor omniscient—that we are only six percent (now four percent) of the world’s population—that we cannot impose our will upon the other 94 percent of mankind—that we cannot right every wrong or reverse each adversity—and that therefore there cannot be an American solution

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to every world problem.” Hardball’s Chris Matthews said “the American people are being herded into war.” I hope we do not turn the Defense Department into the War Department once again and have voiced these concerns on the Floor of the House.

✓ **Presidential Libraries**

I was pleased that the House passed by a vote of 392-3 a bill I introduced to require disclosure of contributions to Presidential libraries. H.R. 577 would require disclosure to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) of any contribution of \$200 or more while the President is in office and \$5,000 or more once the President leaves office. NARA operates and maintains Presidential libraries using both private contributions and federally appropriated funds. I introduced this bill almost a year before it came out that people who wanted pardons or favors from President Clinton were making contributions of several hundred thousand dollars or more to his library. This bill was later endorsed by Common Cause and others, and was introduced in the Senate by Senator Arlen Specter (PA).

✓ **Trade Deficit**

Our trade deficit is now running at an almost unbelievable level of over one billion dollars a day. This means we are buying this much more in foreign-made goods than other countries are buying from us. According to a report by the United States Business and Industry Council, this is “a level that Alan Greenspan and leading economists call ‘unsustainable’.” Exports create jobs here while imports take jobs, and a trade deficit this high means we are still losing millions of jobs to

other countries. I am sick and tired of seeing so many American jobs go to other countries, especially China. We are now buying two billion dollars a week of Chinese goods, and yet many Americans wonder why their children, even with college degrees, cannot find good jobs. We buy almost 25 percent of the world’s goods, and thus have tremendous economic leverage. Our government should give preference in trade deals to countries that buy as much or almost as much from us as we do from them. Instead, we have entered into trade agreements that benefit primarily huge multi-national companies and countries that buy very little from us. Unbelievably, our own Export-Import Bank, a federal agency, recently made an \$18 million loan to a Chinese steel mill.

✓ **Explosive Situation**

Paul Craig Roberts is a nationally syndicated columnist who was one of the highest-ranking Treasury Department officials under President Reagan. He wrote this recently of the movement of operations abroad to get low cost labor: “When this process first began, many economists dismissed it as merely the loss of low-productivity jobs that the U.S. didn’t want anyway. However, the U.S. taxpayer has helped to educate so many Chinese and Indians that well-paying jobs once held by U.S. engineers and research scientists have left the country, taking the incomes with them. The U.S. has become a country that imports poor people and exports jobs that provide upward mobility. It is a mistake to see the loss of jobs and income as the workings of free trade. The downward pressure on incomes does not result from an exchange of goods.

Something different is occurring. Middle-class incomes are being traded away in order to gain larger bonuses for top management, and politicians are pandering to the immigrant vote at the expense of lower-income native-born citizens. The longer this process continues, the more explosive it becomes, both socially and politically.”

✓ **FBI Cover-Up**

The Government Reform Committee recently held a hearing about how the FBI in the Boston area, with the agreement of superiors in the Bureau in Washington and the Justice Department, allowed Joseph Salvati to remain in prison for more than 30 years for a murder they knew he did not commit. This was probably the worst miscarriage of justice I have ever seen. It was apparently done in hopes of catching more high profile or famous criminals. Congressman Dan Burton of Indiana, Chairman of the Committee, was very angry, and said of this and other similar cases: “The United States Department of Justice allowed lying witnesses to send men to death row. It stood by idly while innocent men spent decades behind bars; it permitted informants to commit murder; it tipped off killers so they could flee before they were caught; it interfered with local investigations of drug dealing and arms smuggling; and then when people went to the Justice Department with evidence about murders, some of them ended up dead.”

✓ **Farm Bill**

Robert Samuelson, a columnist for the Washington Post, wrote: “If government waste were an art form, the new farm bill would be the Mona Lisa. The

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lavish agricultural subsidies have few redeeming social or economic values. But as a work of politics, the bill is a masterpiece..." He said the subsidies will total \$200 billion over the next decade, or higher if farm prices are lower than expected. The Washington Times, in a story entitled "Wealthy To Reap Bounty of Farm Bill," reported that billionaire David Rockefeller will receive \$352,187 annually; CNN Founder Ted Turner, \$176,077; NBA star Scottie Pippen, \$131,575; Chevron Corporation, \$260,223; DuPont, \$188,732; John Hancock Insurance Company, \$211,368, etc...Dr. Edwin Feulner, President of the Heritage Foundation, said: "Why should multimillionaire hobby farmers and large, well-heeled corporations get lavish federal payments while most family farms get nothing but a tax bill?" I voted for an amendment by Congressman Nick Smith that set a limit of \$150,000 on annual federal payments per farm; however, this failed by a vote of 238 to 187 in the House.

✓ **Cyber-Security**

My wife was embarrassed recently when it was reported that I had voted against a cyber-security bill that passed 400-12.

I did not speak against or fight this bill, because I receive thousands of constituent requests and simply have far too much to do to take on completely hopeless causes. Most Members wanted to appear supportive of anything "high-tech." But this bill authorized \$800 million to help improve computer safety and security. I regarded it as another example of corporate welfare and felt that since most other businesses have to pay their own money to make their products safe and secure, the very lucrative computer industry should, too. This is my 14th year in the Congress, and I have cast over 7,500 votes during that time. Most of my votes have been with large numbers of other Members and on the winning side. However, I have also voted sometimes with very small numbers if I thought a bill was harmful or wasteful. Every bill has a motherhood and apple pie title, but not every bill is good or affordable.

✓ **Private Property**

It is impossible to satisfy governments' appetite for money and land. They always want more. And, over the last 40 years or so, governments at all levels have been taking private property at an alarming rate. Today, the federal government owns 30 percent of the land, and states and local governments

and quasi-governmental units own another 20 percent. Private property is an extremely important element of both our freedom and our prosperity. It used to be that eminent domain was used mainly to take private property for public use. Now, according to a column in the non-partisan National Journal, condemning private property for private use is a booming national business. The Magazine gave several examples, including the taking of Randy Bailey's 27-year-old brake shop in Mesa, Arizona, for a new chain store. This is happening in thousands of places all over the nation. Jonathan Rauch wrote: "In the last decade, it has become common for city leaders to define 'blighted' as, 'Not developed as nicely as we'd prefer' or 'Not developed by the people we'd prefer'... But property is held sacrosanct in America not to protect the rich and powerful, who always make out all right, but to protect the poor from the predations of the rich and powerful..." The column quoted an official of the Institute for Justice, a law firm trying to protect private property owners, as saying this is now "a major nationwide problem." I hope we will elect more people to federal, state, and local offices who will stop taking so much private property.

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Washington, D.C. 20515
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